"THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE."—CHRIST.

The Christian Freeman.

A MONTHLY UNITARIAN JOURNAL.

DEVOTED TO RELIGIOUS, MORAL, AND SOCIAL PROGRESS.

No. 2.—VOL. XIII.] FEBRUARY, 1869. [PRICE 1½d.

THE PERILS OF MONT BLANC.

WE had ascended Mont Blanc to a height where most travellers are willing and anxious to turn back to the world below; but I was young and ambitious, and foolishly eager to reach that awfully sublime elevation which so few have ever attained, and in attempting which so many have lost their lives.

"Well, master," said the principal guide, to whom I had previously made known my desire, "what say you now?"

"Forward," cried I, with romantic enthusiasm, "to all that man may dare."

"Have you laid your life in the balance with your wish?" he asked.

"I have considered every thing," I replied.

"Then forward it is, for victory or death!"

He then proceeded to hold a consultation with the other guides, and I to take leave of my friends.

Five mountaineers, including the chief guide, decided to accompany me; and, securing ourselves to strong ropes, so that a slip or mis-step of one might not prove fatal to him, we set out, each carrying his knapsack of provisions strapped to his back, and in his hand a long balancing pole, with a hook at one end and a steel point at the other, to assist his footing along dizzy ledges and over yawning chasms whose awful depths could not be penetrated by human eye.

We were already in a region of peril. Around and above us towered mountains of ice and snow, whose slippery and dazzling summits we must gain.

Every step of our progress required labour and care, and some of our exploits, as I remember them, savour more of romance than reality. It was no unusual thing for us to pull ourselves up by our hands from one crag of ice to another, and lower ourselves over some abyss in the same manner, or crawl along some narrow, slippery ledge on our hands and knees, with a sheer descent on either side of us of a thousand feet.

At length we came to a perpendicular wall of ice, some twenty-five or thirty feet in height, over which we must pass direct, or abandon our purpose. We examined it on all sides, but found nothing better than that which directly faced us. How could we surmount the difficulty?

"If we go forward we must climb this precipice of ice—there is no alternative!" at length said the chief guide, turning to me.

"Can it be done?" I inquired.

"That is a question best answered by trying," he replied. "It is difficult and dangerous, but I think it possible."

He then held a short consultation with his companions, and proceeded to the work. He cut places for his hands and feet, and climbing up by means of these, cut others still higher, his comrades steadying him and supporting him as long as they could reach. He then came down, and had one of the poles fastened to his dress, so that they could keep him from losing his balance. In this manner he slowly worked his way up, till the pole became too short, when he came down and rested while another was being made fast to it. Once more he returned to his work, and soon after he accomplished the bold feat, and stood upon the slippery summit.

The rest of us now disengaged ourselves from the rope by which, as I have mentioned, we were all connected together, and two others ascended in the same manner as the first, one of them taking the rope up with him. They now told me it was best for me to go up while there were some below and above to assist me; and to prevent

any accident happening through my inexperience the rope was lowered and fastened around my body, and as fast as I ascended the slack was taken in by those above. When a little more than half-way from the base to the top one of my feet suddenly slipped, and my body partly swung round. I grasped firmly with my hands; and the tightening of the rope, with the assistance of the pole pressing in between my shoulders, kept me from swinging clear, and consequently from dashing my bones on the rough ice below—for the pole could not have supported my weight, and those above would have been compelled to let go the rope to save themselves from being dragged over the precipice. The event gave my nervous system a fearful shock, and in an instant I was in a perspiration, cold as it was; I finally got to the top in safety, but felt so weak and trembling that for some minutes I sat down on the ice to recover my composure. The others, meantime, made the ascent without accident.

We now set forward again, and for some time met with only minor obstacles, which were readily overcome. Towards sunset we came in sight of two sharp-pointed rocks, lifting their bare heads in solemn grandeur above the surrounding snow and ice. These were called the Grand and Petit Mulets, and occupied a position a little more than half-way up the mountain.

"There is the spot," said Gougjon, the principal guide, pointing to the larger of these two rocks, "where, if heaven favours us, we shall pass the coming night."

As we drew near this rock I was led to think heaven would not favour us in reaching that dangerous point; for we were suddenly stopped by a wide, black chasm, that made me giddy to look into.

"The last time I was here," said Gougjon, "there was a narrow wall of ice sloping upward across this chasm, on which I cut steps and advanced, at a great risk of life; but now even that is gone—melted away, perhaps—and so, for all that I can see, our onward journey terminates here."

I was disappointed, I confess, for I had set my heart on standing upon the very pinnacle of Mont Blanc, and feeling that nothing in this world had ever gone up higher.

"As constant changes are going on," remarked the chief guide, "perhaps by this time next year this gulf will be bridged over."

"Ay, perhaps!" I answered moodily.

As it was now too late in the day to retrace our steps before dark the next important thing was to find some sheltered spot where we could pass the cold night. We went back some distance to a crevice which ran around under a huge rock that was in turn heavily overlaid with snow and ice. This was perhaps as comfortable a place as we could find, for here the wind could not reach us, and the overhanging rock would shelter us from the storm in case one should come up suddenly, which was not an unusual thing in that region. For myself, I did not like the idea of spending the night there, for I fancied there was danger of being buried under the avalanche; but, for that matter, there was danger of some kind in every other spot, and perhaps, after all, we should be as safe there as anywhere.

Wrapping myself up as warmly as I could, I passed the first half of the night in walking up and along a little narrow ledge, occasionally exchanging a word with some of the guides, but most of the time brooding in sullen silence over my disappointment. At last, feeling very much fatigued, I went away some distance from the others, and sat down; but finding, after a few minutes, that I was becoming very drowsy, and likely to fall suddenly asleep, which I did not think was prudent, I rose, with the intention of returning to the guides, and keeping myself awake with conversation.

But scarcely had I taken one step forward, when I stopped, and felt my hair rise with horror. I heard a strange sound, more like the distant purring of some animal than any thing else I can liken it to, and at the same moment there was a slight vibration or quiver of the ground under me. I cannot tell why, for I had never experienced any thing of the kind before; but at once, as if by instinct, I seemed to know it was a descending avalanche, and descending, too, from far above, probably to overwhelm and bury me for ever.

Quickly the sound changed, and deepened in volume, and soon became a hissing roar, fairly shaking the ground beneath me; and then my mind was whirled away from self to the dearly-beloved ones at home.

Suddenly, there was a strange rush and oppression of air—a cloud of darkness seemed to settle over me. The hissing roar

ended with a terrible crash, and a silence succeeded, so deep and deadly, that it appeared more awful than a thousand thunders.

But the appalling crisis was over, and I was still alive. I thanked heaven for it, and shouted to my companions in peril. No answer; I shouted again. No response! I started to go to them, and three paces brought me against a wall of ice and snow. I recoiled in horror, and comprehended that they might be no longer among the living. I turned and ran the other way, trembling with fear. Six paces brought me against another wall of ice and snow! It was over me—around me—on every side of me! I was buried alive! I shrieked at the dreadful conviction— my brain reeled, and I fell.

It would be useless for me to attempt to paint the horrors of that night, after recovering my consciousness.

When morning once more dawned, to my great surprise, and, I scarcely need add, rapturous joy, I beheld the light stream into my little chamber through an aperture about the size of my body, and only a few feet above my head. I readily climbed to it, crawled through, and once more stood in the living world.

A tremendous avalanche had fallen: but I had only been caught by a slight portion of the extreme left, and been saved by the overhanging rock, which fortunately had not been displaced in the downward rush of this mountain of ice and snow. Not so the poor guides.

They were further to the right, and they were probably crushed to death. At least, they were gone, and no mortal ever beheld them more.

How I found my way down that awful mountain, alone and unaided, I harldy know. Even now, I can scarcely realise that I actually went through so many dangers and escaped with life. On three occasions, in sliding down the hills of ice, I was sent to the very verge of an awful gulf, and saved, as it were, by a miracle; and three times, in lowering myself down the slippery precipices, I lost my hold, and fell a distance that would have killed most men. And yet not a bone was broken. I was much bruised, however; and once I was so stunned that I knew nothing for an hour. But heaven, in its mercy, saw proper to give me back to the world, and save me from the awful fate of my companions in peril.

A LESSON OF PATIENCE.

THE TALK OF THE LICHENS.

Far up the side of the mountain the naked rock shot up still higher. It seemed very high as you looked upward. The rock was even on its face, and was full perpendicular. On its surface were four kinds of lichens growing—from that whose leaf was very small, to the last, which was quite coarse and large. We sometimes see such lichens on an old fence, an old tree, or an old house. The face of the huge rock was almost covered with them. As I sat down under the shadow of the mountain, waiting for my friends, I gazed at the lichen, and began to wonder in my own mind what it was created for, and of what use could it be, when I seemed to hear a small, crispy voice, far up the rock, calling out:—

"Mother, how old am I?"

"Why, my child, you have just begun to live. You are only eighty years old yet."

"And how old are you?"

"I call myself young, for I am only five hundred and twenty years old."

I now listened with all my ears, for I knew the lichens were talking among themselves. I felt sure they would say more, and I took out my pencil to put down what they might say. Pretty soon I heard the same little voice say:

"Mother, ain't you discouraged?"

"Discouraged! at what, pray?"

"At your size! Five hundred and twenty years old, and how very small you are?"

"Not so small, either! I cover six inches square already, while there's my poor grandmother almost eleven hundred years old, and she covers only five inches even now! Very few, I am happy to say, of the lichen family who have worked harder or accomplished more than I have, though I do say it myself."

"Well, mother, of what use is it to cling to this great rock, and hang here summer and winter, amid storms, and cold, and wind beating upon us? Here I have clung and been trying to gnaw into this rock for eighty years, and have not yet got my roots in half an inch. What's the use? We

might as well die and drop off. Nobody would miss us or care. What do we live for?"

"To raise wheat."

"Raise *what?*"

"Raise wheat, to be sure."

"Pray, mother, what do you mean? We lichens, away up here, on this cold rock, raise wheat! If that isn't funny!"

"Listen, my child. This huge mountain is a solid rock. If it was all pounded up fine it would make soil on which men would raise wheat. But it is now very hard, and there is nothing to pound and turn it into powder. And so God has created us, the lichens, to have our home here to cling to it, to gnaw it, and, with a kind of acid we have, to crumble and dissolve it. Don't you remember that the very last year you rolled down two little grains of the rock? Well, every grain we make falls down; then the rains wash it into the little brook, and the brook carries it into the river, and the river raises it up, and as it overflows its bank drops it just where the old soil is worn out, and the wheat needs new. The Nile thus carries down little particles from the mountains, and makes Egypt so fruitful."

"O! mother, how often can I gnaw off rock enough to raise a kernel of wheat?"

"Perhaps once in thirty years."

"O! what slow work! When will what you dig out this year raise wheat?"

"Perhaps five hundred years hence. God sees that there will be old men and little children upon the earth then, and they will want bread; and so he has created us and placed us here to prepare soil, and get this rock ready to raise wheat. Thus he goes before and provides, and makes even the poor little lichens useful; and if we do our duty his smile will cheer us; and though we can do but little, yet that will do good to somebody."

The lichens stopped talking, but I did not stop thinking. What would my young reader have thought had he been there?

REV. THOMAS BELSHAM.

One known to be the intimate and trusted friend of Dr. Priestley and Theophilus Lindsey has on that ground alone a claim upon our attention, but Mr. Belsham does not stand in need of their reflected lustres to keep his name in remembrance. His character and services are generally associated on almost equal terms with those of his two eminent contemporaries and deservedly so. All three were remarkable men—noble confessors of Christian truth—the fathers of modern Unitarianism. Whatever be the enlightenment of our own days, of which perhaps we are inclined to boast a little too much; or whatever the eminence of our theologians, scholars, and divines, it is impossible, at least for a Unitarian, not to look back with a peculiar interest upon the latter half of the last century. In those years the battle of religious liberty was fought with no common vigour. In those years the Established Church wielded a most repressive civil as well as ecclesiastical domination. Calvinism was preached with a freshness and completeness now seldom heard; and Unitarianism was beyond the pale of legal toleration, a term scarcely known in our language. Strong men were needed to break through the bondage that enthralled the religious mind of England; and the leaders of this movement were enquestionably Priestley, Lindsey, and Belsham. The world is familiar with the fierce storm of persecution that banished to America the gentle and philosophic Priestley. We also know how Lindsey, in obedience to the dictates of conscience, resigned the living of Catterick in Yorkshire, and founded the first avowedly Unitarian church, that of Essex street, London. It is remarkable that Belsham also was nurtured in a creed, that of Calvinism, which he was obliged to abandon; and he, with his two distinguished associates, were the main instruments in changing the somewhat languid and formal liberalism of the last century to the earnest spirit of inquiry and of theological progress which has since their time prevailed. They were diligent students of the Scriptures, courageous in avowing what they held to be truth, and unflinching in its maintenance. For this we honour them. Fidelity to conscience, whatever be the form it takes, is the highest service man can render to God and his country. We have no occasion to assume their infallibility, or set them up as lords over the soul. They were human, and therefore imperfect, and could not see perhaps in every particular point as we

see; but they did their work nobly and well, and it is not likely to be forgotten.

Thomas Belsham was born at Bedford in the year 1750. His parents were respectable, and of the Calvinistic persuasion. They seem to have early imbued their son with a deep, strong spirit of piety, and destined him for the Christian ministry. At the age of sixteen he was sent to the academy at Daventry, then the principal seat for the education of the dissenting ministry and, in connection with which, either as pupil or tutor, he continued to labour (except a short period he was minister of a congregation at Worcester) until his adoption of Unitarian opinions about the year 1789. He was then in his fortieth year, in the full vigour of bodily and mental power, and adequately equipped with the best learning of his time. The change involved its sacrifices. He was in a position of much confidence and influence, was esteemed for his high character, and respected for his various talents. He occupied a post which had been honoured by the scholarship of Jennings, the sanctity of Dodderidge, Ashworth, Robins, and other Nonconformist worthies. But he did not hesitate to obey the call of duty, and from the ample diary which records his feelings and motives on the occasion, and in which he continued to chronicle the leading events of his outward and inward history until the close of his long life, a full understanding of the whole man can be easily gathered. This diary is embodied in the lengthened memoir written by his friend the late Rev. John Williams of Mansfield, to which volume we would refer the reader who seeks fuller details than we can give in this short paper.

After retiring from Daventry Mr. Belsham was for a period tutor at Hackney, but about the year 1794 settled as minister of the Gravel-pit meeting, where he preached with increasing acceptance for eleven years, until he was invited, chiefly through the influence of Mr. Lindsey, to remove to Essex-street as successor to Dr. Disney, as an expounder of Scripture in its, to him, pure and simple form of Unitarian doctrine. His fame was great; his popularity as a preacher continued almost uninterrupted to the close, and he died at the ripe age of eighty, in the year 1829, leaving a memory which is still gratefully cherished by the aged survivors of his intelligent and influential congregation.

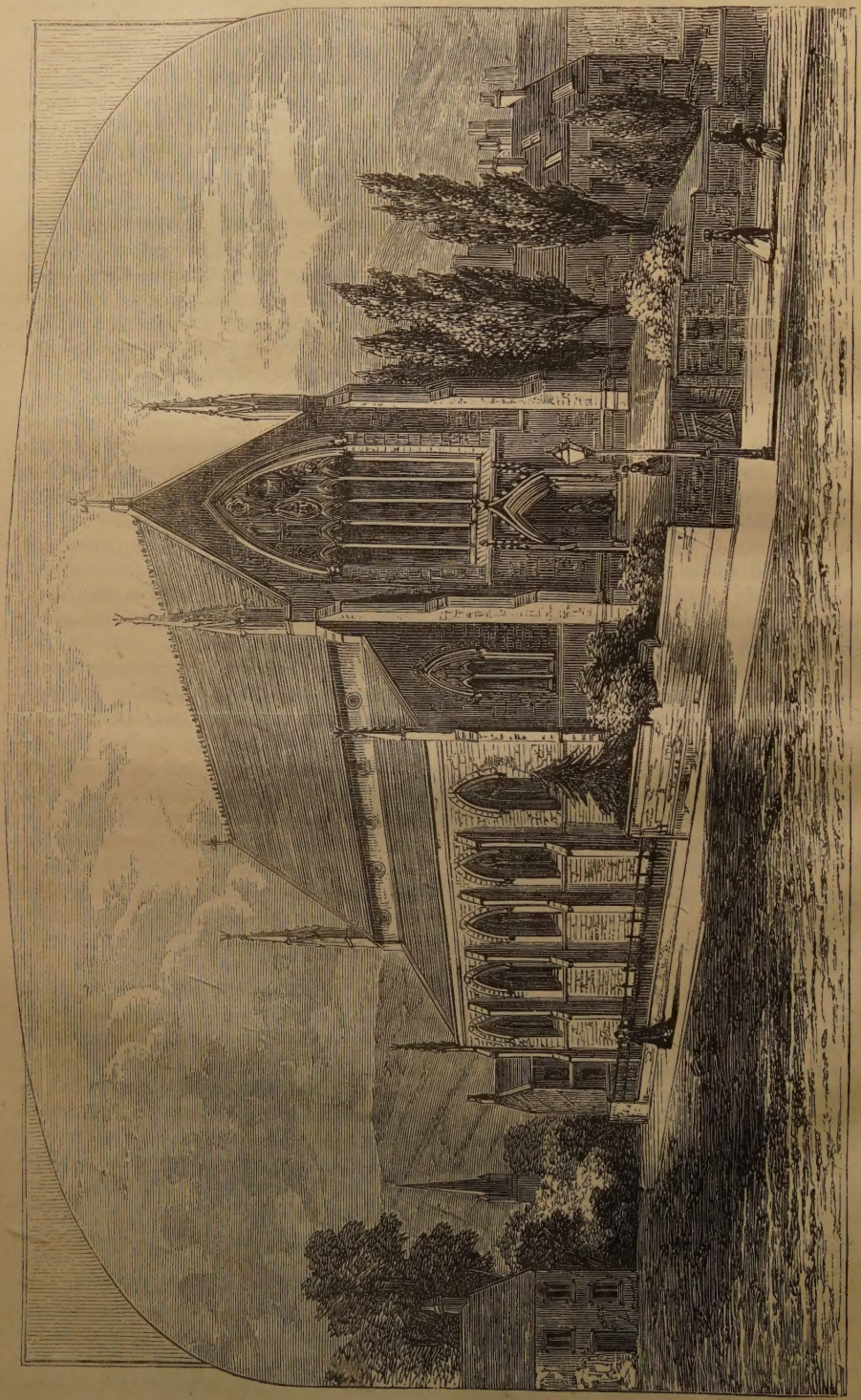
But his most permanent memorial is in his labours as an author. Besides a variety of occasional and doctrinal discourses, he published "Elements of the Philosophy of Mind and of Moral Philosophy," one volume; "Memoirs of Theophilus Lindsey;" and a translation, with commentary, of St. Paul's epistles, in four volumes. His "improved version" of the New Testament, with a corrected text, and notes critical and explanatory, was on its appearance flippantly attacked in the "Quarterly Review," and other orthodox publications, but it still remains, after all drawbacks, an evidence of care, scholarship, industry, and zeal for Christian, knowledge and truth. His greatest work we hold to be his translation of the Epistles, on which many years of his matured study were spent. To give the reader some idea of his vigorous style and caste of thought we append the following characteristic and interesting passage from his sermon "On the Importance of Truth" preached at the Meeting-house in the Old Jewry, London, to the supporters of the new College at Hackney, April, 1790.

"There are none who set a higher value on truth, and none who are so well qualified to judge of its comparative excellence, as the persons who have been the practical disciples of error. Let those then whose minds have been perplexed concerning the proper subjects of religious worship, who have been anxious to pay to each of three supposed divine persons the homage due to them, but doubtful how to regulate their addresses, and fearful of offending one by undue attention to another—let those whose feelings have dictated what they dare not avow, nor even think that they have felt, that the formidable chimera of their imaginations, to which they have annexed the name of God the Father, was a merciless tyrant—who have believed that he treated his intelligent offspring as no kind human parent would have treated his children, nor any just and good governor his subjects—who were secretly wishing, though they dare not believe that they wished, that the reins of universal government were in better hands—who with aching hearts have viewed an omnipotent God marking with a jealous and inexorable eye every instance of human frailty and folly—who have been harrassed with

distressing doubts whether they were in the number of the chosen few or doomed to eternal misery by an irresistible and arbitrary decree for the sin of another; let such (and some who now hear me know that I am not describing a fictitious character) declare the satisfaction they felt when brought our of this darkness into marvellous light, when rescued from this more than Egyptian bondage into a new and a glorious liberty—when, by the blessing of God, upon their religious inquiries they were led to form just sentiments of religion, to entertain a firm conviction of the absolute unity of God, of his consummate wisdom, of his boundless goodness, of the equity of his government, of the reasonableness of his law, and of his indulgent regard to the frail and erring children of men—let them declare which of those two opposite systems has the most direct tendency to animate, to cheer, and to purify the heart, to inspire confidence in God and benevolence to men, to make obedience a pleasure, to pour balm into the wounded spirit, and to diffuse a pleasing tranquillity over the mind incapable of being discomposed by the storms of life, and let them say whether the acquisition and profession of these just and elevating sentiments be not well worth any labour or any sacrifice which they may cost, and whether they do not naturally raise the generous wish that all who are acquainted with the gospel may entertain the same rational and amiable views of its divine doctrine, and may unite with one accord in ascribing glory to God in the highest, because there is peace on earth and goodwill to men."

ENDLESS LIFE.

We have repeatedly had the following question proposed to us, "that if the punishment of the wicked may come to an end in a future state, what guarantee have we from any passage of Scripture that the reward of the righteous will not also terminate, as the same word is used to designate the duration of each, that is, the word everlasting?" We have repeatedly answered this question, but it is necessary again and again to re-state our reason for not believing in endless punishment and at the same time for believing in endless, virtuous happy life. Every scholar knows the word "everlasting" is more frequently used in the Bible to denote an undefined period, sometimes long and sometimes short, rather than to denote eternity; and all who force the word everlasting into the service of endless punishment ought to show some special reason for giving it in this case that awful meaning; for there is nothing in the word itself, nothing in the nature of God, nothing in justice or the nature of sin, we think, to justify such a terrible alternative. But we are questioned, in the words of the late Archbishop of Canterbury, "if we deny the endless punishment of the wicked, on what Scriptural ground do we hope for endless life, the same words having been used to set forth both conditions." We beg to answer that we can conceive under the just and merciful government of God both sin and its punishment being terminable without shocking any instinct of our nature, or violating our conception of the Almighty as a Heavenly Father. The doctrine of the endless punishment of even the worst of men seems to outrage both reason and affection, and renders God less worthy of our reverence, trust, and love. And then again we add that the Archbishop was wrong in saying the same words are used to express the duration of both, as we shall show. The Apostle Paul, in a passage well known to every one, speaks of the dead being raised incorruptible, and of the mortal putting on immortality; and also of the future state as one of glory, honour, and immortality. There is nothing said of immortality in a state of sin and suffering, however long it may be. Christ has said of his disciples, "they shall *never* perish;" and Christ hath brought "life and *immortality* to light," and of Christ's kingdom there shall be NO END. Once again, then, we aver that the word "everlasting" in no case necessarily implies endless existence, and therefore the duration must be determined by the justice and mercy of God; whereas when we are informed there shall be no more death, no more sorrow or sighing, that we shall never perish, that our house in heaven shall never be dissolved, that we shall have an incorruptible and immortal life, and that of Christ's kingdom there shall be no end, we have surely evidence in the language of Scripture of a life and blessedness that far transcends the duration of the punishment of sin.



MISS FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE.

FITZWILLIAM STREET CHURCH, HUDDERSFIELD.

The acompanying engraving sufficiently testifies to the general architectural character of the above ecclesiastical edifice. It is situated from south to north, with a corresponding but larger window in the north side. The five west windows, visible in the engraving, are all stained glass, of geometrical design; the munificent gift of Henry Creswell, Esq., one of the oldest living members of the church. The roof is supported within by hexagonal pillars, which add immensely to the conforming aspect of the place, but detract as immensely from the comfort of the congregation, by interforming such a quantity of opaque substance between their vision and the minister's face. The number of seats is two hundred and fifty, most of which are taken. The loftiness of the roof, with its peculiar sky-blue colouring, gives a light and airy appearance to the interior, which, combined with the neat and tasteful decorations that have been recently added to the walls, make the building as a place of worship quite cheerful and agreeable.

Underneath the church is a large commodious school-room, well supplied with forms every day, pretty well filled with children on a Sunday, as well as with people on the first Wednesday evening in every month, when the library and musical evenings in connection with the school are given. The same imposition and inconvenience of aspect extend themselves through the church and the school, to the alternate pleasure and annoyance of visitors to the evenings, according as their architectural or literary and musical tastes are in question.

The building is but young, being founded in August, 1853, by Mark Phillips, Esq., and opened December 21st, 1854. The school-room was not completed till May, 1855.

The minister at the time of the opening of the church was the Rev. J. K. Montgomery (now of Chester), to whom indeed is due a very large share of the honour and glory of the edifice, for his exertions were absolutely untiring to amass the requisite sum, that the church might start debt-free. The whole cost—church and school—inclusive of organ, was £3500. To Mr. Montgomery succeeded the Rev. Wm. Matthews, services in recognition of whom took place on the 28th of December, 1859. After him came the present minister, the Rev. J. Thomas, who entered upon his duties as pastor, in October, 1863.

Adjoining the church is a plot of ground, set apart ostensibly for a parsonage. It is proposed to build this when there shall be money enough. Meantime the proceeds of a bazaar to the amount of £500 are in hand, and well invested.

The cause of Free Christianity flourishes in Huddersfield. In spite of death and removals from town, which jointly have taken many away, the congregation still keeps up, and in numbers even increases. Fine Sundays see fine congregations. Wet Sundays counteract attendance notoriously everywhere amongst our people. Fitzwilliam Street Church is no exception. But if the members of the congregation miss the services sometimes, they do not miss the regular business of their lives, and by doing their duty, each one of them in that state of life with which it has pleased God to call them, they are enabled to do good service themselves unostentatiously in behalf of those principles of right and liberty which are associated with our ideas of religion. Every Unitarian church ought to, and mostly does, send forth men whose lives should protest against every form of intolerance, as well as be examples of the Christian graces. Wherever the worshippers may be in such a case, there the very building wherein they assemble becomes, by its associations in men's minds, a standing protest likewise in its silent presence against all that is opposed to the liberal and soothing spirit of pure and genuine Christianity. May such a glory attend the sacred structure whose engraved sketch we have herewith presented to the reader.

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE.

In a former number, Vol. X, page 2, we have told the tale of her interesting career up to her return to England from Scutari. Since that time she has been constantly engaged, when her health permitted, in caring for the sick, and initiating others in the art of nursing. Her name is properly held in reverence, not only in every English home, but all over the civilised world.

THE THREE RINGS.*

THE following tale or parable is taken from a dramatic poem, entitled "Nathan the Wise," by the German author Lessing—a work which, full of noble sentiments, eventuates more especially the principle of toleration, by showing that it is rather the influence of religion on the heart and mind than its outward profession which should prove its divine origin. The scene of the drama is laid in Jerusalem during the time of the Crusades, which brought into contact with each other—Jews, Christians, and Mussulmans. Nathan, a Jewish merchant, has by his wealth and repute for wisdom attracted the notice of the Sultan Saladin, who sends for him and questions him as to his faith. For so wise a man it seems impossible, he says, that the mere accident of birth should alone determine his choice of a religion, and he would fain learn from him "which dispensation, faith, or law seems to him the best." In reply, after time has been allowed him for consideration, Nathan begs leave to tell a little tale, and having gained the permission of the Sultan, relates as follows :—

"In the olden, olden time
There lived an Eastern chief, who owned a ring
Of priceless worth, had from the hands of one
He dearly loved. The stone, an opal, flashed
The broken light in hundred lovely hues
Upon the eye, and had the marvellous power
To make him loved alike of God and man,
Who, strong in this assurance, wore the ring.
What wonder, therefore, if this Eastern lord,
Ne'er left the treasure from his hand, and made
Such disposition as secured its passing
As heirloom in his house for ever? He,
Leaving the ring to him among his sons
Whom he loved best, commanded that his heir
Should in his turn bequeath it to the one
Among his sons whom he most dearly loved;
And more, that the possessor of the ring,
Without regard to claims from prior birth,
In right of ownership alone should rule
As lord of all—you understand me, Sultan?

SALADIN:
Proceed—I understand.

NATHAN:
So came the ring
From sire to son, until at length it fell
To one, the father of three loving sons,
All dutiful alike, and all by him
Cherished with like regard; now this, now that,
And then the third, appearing in his eyes
The dearest and the best, as each in turn
Was left with him alone; the other two
Not sharing them i' the love that filled his heart—
Each, in a word, seemed worthiest of the ring;
And he, with pious weakness, promised each
That he should have it. Time ran on, and on,
Till the old man, knowing that his end drew nigh,
Began to feel the pain of his position.
It grieved him sorely now that he must needs
Defeat the hopes of two among his sons,
Each one of whom he knew relied on him.
What could be done—how 'scape from the dilemma?
He summons privily a jeweller,
Of whom he orders two more opal rings
After the pattern of the one he wore,
Nor cost nor pains being spared in making these
Exactly like his own. The artist triumphs;
The rings produced, the father cannot tell
Which of the three is his. Content, resigned,
He calls his sons in turn to his bedside,
And gives to each his blessing and a ring,
And soon thereafter dies. You mark me Sultan?

SALADIN:
I mark you well; but end your tale I pray.

NATHAN:
It is already at an end; for all
That follows may be readily divined.
The father dead, each son displays his ring,
And would assert his place as lord of all;
Discussion follows, difference, dispute—
In vain! The true ring cannot now be known—
[Pause.]
As little known as 'mong ourselves this day
The true religion.

SALADIN:
What! is't thus you answer me?

NATHAN:
Sire, I but seek excuse from hazarding
Distinction 'twixt three rings expressly made
So much alike, that one to outward view
Should not be known from another.

SALADIN:
But the rings!—
And see you palter not with me in this!—
Methought the three great Dispensations named
Were verily distinct from one another—
Distinct, even to the meat and drink and garb
Of those professing them.

NATHAN:
But not distinct
As to the grounds on which they rest in common—
The ground whereon we all receive our Faith:
For rest not all alike on history,
Traditional or written? And history
Must still be matter taken upon trust.
Now whose the faith and trust we question least?
Whose but our own, or theirs from whom we sprang—
Whose blood runs in our veins—who from our birth

* "Nathan the Wise." Trübner, Paternoster-row.

Have given us proofs of their enduring love—
Who never even for our weal deceived us?
How then should I believe my fathers less
Than you do yours, or how require of you
To give to your progenitors the lie
That you may credit mine? I speak as Jew
To Mussulman; to Christian t'were the same.

SALADIN (aside):

By Heaven, the man says well, and I am answered.

NATHAN:

Return we to the story of our rings:
As said, the sons could come to no agreement;
Each swore in turns before the judge that he
Had had his ring immediate from the hand
Of his dear father—and how true was this!
That he besides had had his father's promise
Of all the privileges of the ring—
How no less than true! His father loved him dearly;
Could not have played him false; sooner than think
Of harbouring doubts of one so dear to him,
Though still disposed to think the best of them,
He'd rather charge his brothers with foul play;
But he'd find means to unmask the traitors; yes,
He'd be revenged.

SALADIN:

Well, then, what said the judge?
I long to hear what you will make him say.

NATHAN:

Thus spoke the judge: As ye do not—cannot,
Produce the father, I dismiss the suit.
What! think ye I am here to unravel riddles?
Or shall we stay until the true ring speaks?
But hold! the true ring has the power, 'tis said,
To make its owner loved of God and man.
This must decide. The counterfeits you'll own
Have no such virtue. Say, then, as you stand,
Which of the three love two of you the most?
What—silent all! Each loves himself alone,
And ye are doubtless all alike deceived;
The rings ye wear must needs be counterfeits;
The magic ring was lost, as it would seem,
And to conceal the loss, your loving father
Had those ye wear made like it.

SALADIN:

Excellent!
Proceed I pray!

NATHAN:

The judge went on and said,
If ye seek judgment, and not counsel, go!
But would ye rather be advised, I'd say
Content ye with the matter as it stands.
If from his father each had had a ring,
Let each believe his own to be the true one;
'Tis possible your father willed to end
This sov'reignty among his sons;
To me, indeed, 'twould plainly seem that he
Had loved you all alike when he took steps
To aggrieve no two by favouring one. Well, then,
Let each of you comfort himself in such wise
As love unbribed commands; let each resolve
To show the world that in the ring he wears
He holds the prize, its virtues being shown
To MAN in acts of justice, meekness, mercy;
To GOD in thoughts of love and heartfelt trust,
And when a thousand-thousand years have past—
When children's children wear the rings—
Came they anew before this judgment seat,
One wiser than myself might then sit here,
And make the award. Thus spoke the righteous judge.

SALADIN:

My God! My God!

ON THE SPREAD OF UNITARIANISM.

THE growth of Unitarian opinions among the English Presbyterians during the course of the last century naturally caused a revolution in many of the congregations. In some cases an orthodox minority succeeded, and joined the Independents; in other cases the Unitarian minority had to find a new place of worship, while the orthodox majority carried the Meeting-house to the rival sect. And it was not till the end of the century that the division between the two opinions became clearly marked. During that transition period the old Presbyterianism was dying out, and the new Unitarianism struggling into life. And by the end of the century there remained no congregation of orthodox English Presbyterians. In the year 1813 the penal laws against Unitarianism were repealed, and its professors for a moment thought that they had gained full toleration. But the ingenuity of the lawyers told them that they were mistaken; and it was not till the year 1844 that they were relieved from forfeiture of their chapels. It is from that year that we must measure the progress made in spreading our opinions. In Dr. Beard's "Unitarianism Exhibited," 1846, we learn that there were 318 places of worship in the three kingdoms where Unitarianism was the religion of the congregation. The Unitarian Almanac for this year gives us a list of 348 places of Unitarian worship, showing an increase of 30. But this by no means gives us the whole gain. On examining the two lists, we find that 34 congregations have died out, and 60 new ones have arisen. Hence, if we are measuring the strength, not of a sect, but of an opinion, we need give but little thought to the 34 congregations which are removed from the list. They probably never held any clearly pronounced opinions; they were part of the expiring

body of Presbyterians. But the 60 new congregations are certainly in every case of decidedly Unitarian sentiments. That number represents more correctly our gain in Unitarian places of worship in the last twenty-two years, which, however, is not more than *one per cent. per annum*, and less than the increase of the population of the country. But this does not tell us anything of the number of Unitarian worshippers, which has certainly increased much faster. Many of these congregations which were very small are now largely increased. Of this increase we have no record. An approach to the knowledge required on this point may be gained from a review of our Unitarian periodical literature; and this tells a very different tale. In 1844 our Unitarian periodicals were the "Christian Reformer," the "Christian Pioneer," and the "Prospective Review," all monthly or quarterly, and the "Inquirer," which alone was published weekly; and their united sale was certainly not more than 3000 of each issue, or 5000 copies a month. At present we have the CHRISTIAN FREEMAN and the "Truthseeker," monthly, and the "Inquirer" and the "Unitarian Herald," both weekly; and their united sale is probably over 12,000 each issue, or 30,000 a month. Thus in the last twenty-two years the Unitarian periodicals have increased four or five fold; that is to say, they show an increase of about 20 per cent. per annum, while our places of worship show an increase of only 1 per cent. per annum, and the growth of Unitarian opinions may be represented by some figure intermediate between the two. If we are right in thinking that during these years our chapels have become less empty, the future growth must be shown in an increase to the number of congregations. And this is what the Unitarian Almanac tells us is now taking place, as it records an addition of twenty chapels or new preaching stations during the last two years, which would be an increase of 4 per cent. per annum. But any inference drawn from the doings of one or two years is very little to be relied on. Everything, however, is most encouraging to the bold out-spoken expression of our sentiments, and to the proclaiming on all proper occasions our Unitarianism. In the following enumeration of the Unitarian places of worship in Great Britain and Ireland, they are classified according to the place where the minister was educated. The figures are taken out of the Unitarian Pocket Almanac for this and the last four years:—

	1864	1865	1866	1867	1868
York and Manchester New-College ..	53	51	52	55	55
Home Missionary ..	34	39	42	43	46
Belfast	39	39	37	37	35
Carmarthen .. .	22	21	20	20	20
Glasgow	18	17	14	14	14
Dublin	5	5	5	5	3
Other Colleges . ..	27	29	32	29	32
Unknown..	70	67	65	70	68
	268	268	267	273	273
Chapels vacant ..	23	20	29	31	27
Kept open by supplies	41	44	32	39	48
	332	332	328	343	348

Of the ministers in the above lists those preaching in Ireland were 43 in the year 1864, and only 40 in the year 1868. Thus during these years the Irish ministers have lessened in number by 3, those in the rest of the kingdom have increased by 8.

In this table there are several sources of inaccuracy which arise from the returns not being sent to the editor of the Almanac on one uniform plan. Thus, several of our ministers were educated at more than one of the above-mentioned colleges, and they may have been classed under a wrong head. But this will make no mistake in the important result. But a more serious source of error is the calling a chapel vacant, when it ought to be struck out of the list as wholly and for ever closed. This is perhaps the case with several of the old Presbyterian chapels. Our lists would be far more satisfactory if we had the power of distinguishing between a chapel which is permanently vacant because there is no congregation and one which has its pulpit vacant for the moment because the congregation are looking about for a minister. A place of worship which one year is kept open by supplies may on the following year be said to be vacant for either of two reasons: the congregation may have lessened, and worship there may have been discontinued, or the congregation may have increased, and they now want a minister.

CHRIST, DIVINE AND HUMAN.

BY REV. F. H. HEDGE, D.D.

THE question concerning the nature of Christ was the first opened, and will probably be the last closed in Christian dogmatics. Scarcely can two individuals be found who think precisely alike in this matter; and yet all who rightly claim the name of Christian are agreed in this, that there is a divine and also a human element in the gospel and life of Christ. In what manner and proportion these elements unite, who can ascertain with perfect assurance for himself?—who will undertake to determine for others? Councils and creeds may decide the question for ecclesiastical use; but no council can determine and no creed can state it with such authority and such precision as to satisfy all the demands of the understanding and the heart. It is a question of philosophy, not of religion, and one whose theoretical solution is not essential to spiritual growth. The heart that seeks will find a practical solution of it suited to its own need; but all will not find the same. Some are born to one way of thinking, some to another. Some prefer to contemplate the divine in Christianity; some the human. Some require a human God for their Saviour, and some require a mortal example for their standard and guide in action and suffering.

To me it seems that the truest form of Christian faith unites both elements, the divine and the human; and that none can know the full power of the gospel, and experience all its height and depth and breadth, where either is wanting.

I. We want the divine; we want to see in Christianity the power of God and the wisdom of God made manifest for the moral welfare of men; we want to see the spirit of God entering into human nature to revive and redeem it. We want a teacher conscious of God's inpresence, claiming attention as a voice out of the heavens. We want a doctrine which shall announce itself with divine authority; not a system of moral philosophy, but the word and kingdom of God. Without this stamp of divine legitimacy, without the witness and signature of the Eternal, Christianity would want that which alone gives it weight with the mass of mankind and the place it now holds in human things. This it is which constitutes the specific difference between philosophy and religion; between the abstractions of the intellect addressed to the intellect, and truth incarnate, addressing heart and will.

II. We need in Christianity the human also. We need the Son of Man; we need the human example as model and motive. We need for our Saviour a nature to which no human expedience is strange—a nature that images, but completes our own. If I saw in Jesus only God assuming human nature, enacting a human part for the inculcation of moral truth, I should see an illustration of the fair and good, but without flesh and bones; a hollow apparition. I need no gospel to show me that God is without sin, that God can act wisely, that God can bless. What I want to know is that man can resist; that man can endure; that man can be holy, and live a sinless life on the earth. This is the lesson of the life of Jesus, and this its chief value for us. The gospel is given as a revelation of God, but is given also as a revelation of man; as a type of human nature, a pledge of human destiny; as encouragement to human frailty, as incentive to action; a call from the Son of Man to the sons of men—a call to glory and immortality; a pledge of divine communications according to the measure of faith; a witness to all generations that the communications of Godhead, and the wonder-working power of the spirit, are always equal to man's receptivity, and that the measure of man's receptivity is his obedience.

THE EVENING HYMN.

THE vesper time draws nigh,
The pale moon trembles in th' horizon fair;
And stars are whispering in the quiet sky—
It is the hour of prayer.

Bend, bend, the heart and knee,
For day's long toil and trouble now are past;
Whom should we seek at this still hour but Thee,
Saviour—at last?

It may be in the day,
Our hearts, too busy and too worldly grown,
Sometimes forget thy love, mistrust thy way;
This hour is all thine own.

May holy angels keep
Watch through the dark night while we be at rest,
Send peaceful dreamings through our quiet sleep,
Of the departed blest.

Should this night be our last
Of earthly watching and of earthly care,
Then may we wake in Heaven, all sorrow past
And praise Thee there.

WAYSIDE GATHERINGS.

LIBERAL CHRISTIANS.—The American Unitarian Association proposes to raise £20,000 this year. The quota of Boston is £5000.

A GOOD SIGN.—At the recent Unitarian Convention in New York two Methodist bishops were present, and spoke in the most friendly manner in the convention as delegates.

A JEW'S REPLY.—Among a number of workmen there was a Jew who was not kindly treated by some of the men, and one of them assigned as a reason that the Jews had killed *our* God. The Jew replied, "they might kill his if they could lay their hands upon him."

THE TEXT.—A little girl who had been at church was asked by her mother if she remembered the text. "O, yes," she replied, "the Ladies' Sewing Society will meet at Mrs. McCrackens, Monday evening next." Many grown-up children do not remember any more.

PROUD OF HIS PROFESSION.—Henry Ward Beecher says, I have always been glad that I chose the ministry of the gospel of Christ as the business of my life. My work has been a joy to me all the way. I cannot conceive of another profession in which the noble enjoyments are so many and the drawbacks so few.

GOOD NEWS.—It was decided by the conference of German ladies at Stuttgard that something must be done to check the extravagance, bad taste, and frequent changes in female dress. It was resolved to organise a commission composed of painters, doctors, tailors, and modistes to suggest new toilettes.

"DIED—IN HIS PRIME."—Mr. Liddon, the latest Bampton lecturer, after insisting very strenuously upon the absolute deity of Jesus, calls attention to the fact that Jesus died for mankind "in the prime of life." A good case of the *reductio ad absurdum*. Think of it. The Eternal Ever-Living God *died in his prime!*

OPINIONS ABOUT DR. CHANNING.—After reading Channing's work a minister recently said, in the North of England, Channing was almost a Christian. Emerson tells of a man who had known Dr. Channing for years, and who said he thought "the doctor was capable of vitue." We once heard a preacher say that the writings of Channing on education and politics were valuable, but utterly worthless on religion. So does prejudice and bigotry seal the vision still to the work of one of the divinest men of the present century.

NOVEL ACCUSATION AGAINST UNITARIANS.—One of our correspondents writes:—"While staying about a year ago at a country town some distance from the metropolis I was much surprised to hear some one remark in a rather contemptuous manner, in reference to Unitarianism: 'Why, the absurdity is shown in the name itself! *Three* in one! The idea is positively ridiculous.' 'You're quite right there,' I exclaimed, laughing at this novel accusation; but, as it happens, we believe the very opposite. Unitarianism means *one only! not* three in one!'"

FORCE AND RIGHT.—Matthew Arnold quotes a beautiful saying, that "force and right are the governors of this world; force till the right is ready."

THE USE OF TEXTS. There is often great force, and sometimes a covert meaning, conveyed in the choice of a text. An anecdote illustrative of this is recorded of Dr. Paley, the well-known author of "Natural Theology," "Evidences of Christianity," and other popular works. When Pitt, as First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer, at the age of twenty-three, revisited Cambridge, where he had graduated, Paley marked with a sarcastic eye how assiduously some of the leading members of the university courted the youthful Prime Minister, and made up to him in view of the good things which he would now have at his disposal. It was Paley's turn to preach before the university at St. Mary's on the Sunday during Pitt's visit; accordingly, he took for his text, "There is a lad here which had five barley loaves and two small fishes," adding, as he looked round on the crowded church, "but what are they among so many!"

ORTHODOX LINGO "PLAYED" OUT. — This kind of talk about the infidelity of Unitarian Christians is being "played out." If "a clown may pass as a gentleman so long as he lingers about the stables," so may you pass for God's elect as you can prevent people from thinking, reading, and having other than your own "pious dodge." Your pretension to "genuine spiritual manliness" will be futile until you cease to bear false witness against your neighbours. The people have been deceived long enough, and frightened far too much with these shams on the part of your 'doctrine of devils.' Instead of turning pale at them, we propose pricking the bubbles. As we try our swords upon our redoubtable knights, we find them only men in buckram. History is with us; philosophy is with us; common sense is with us. All men's uncorrupted consciences are on our side. Truth, attended by the eternal years of God, is our shield. Every science is forging guns for us in the laboratories. In our aid, society is working out the problems of your errors, and showing them to be palpable absurdities. Angels cluster about, and a cloud of witnesses compass us above, when we defend the infinite worth of every immortal soul.—*Rev. A. W. Bruce.*

THE following are the terms for supplying the CHRISTIAN FREEMAN, post free:—

1 copy	per year	2s. 6d.
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Communications for the Editor to be addressed to the Rev. R. SPEARS, 56, Grosvenor Park, Camberwell, London, S.E., and all Business Letters to EDWARD T. WHITFIELD, 178, Strand, London.

Printed by SAMUEL TAYLOR, Graystoke-place, Fetter-lane, London, and Published by EDWARD T. WHITFIELD, 178, Strand.